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Washington Report
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Congressman, 24th District

June 3, 1981

TIMERMAN REVIVES INTEREST IN HUMAN RIGHTS

The respected Argentine newspaper editor, Jacobo Timerman, has single-handedly aroused new and intense interest in the issue of human rights. He has accomplished this through the publication of his remarkable memoirs, PRISONER WITHOUT A NAME, CELL WITHOUT A NUMBER, and through numerous interviews with American journalists.

As Timerman would be the first to admit, his story is not new. What is unique is his ability to communicate both the bare facts and the deep psychological consequences of his two and a half years as a prisoner in Argentina. Timerman was imprisoned by a right wing military faction. As is usually the case, no charges were filed against the prisoner, he received no hearing or trial of any sort. Even to this day the grounds for his incarceration cannot be stated with certainty.

Timerman himself feels that the central motive was anti-Semitism. Of course, his right wing captors held it against him that he was a prominent liberal newspaper editor, and an outspoken opponent of extremist violence of both the right and the left. Yet, Timerman feels these factors alone did not account for his experience.

Timerman says, "in a given moment, we Jews all become Jews again, only Jews. That a Jew is only that, a Jew."

Unlike many survivors of political imprisonment, Timerman is anxious to discuss his thirty months behind bars in vivid detail.

He describes step-by-step the electric shock tortures to which he was regularly subjected. His body was doused with water so that the shock would be felt over a greater area. The torture instruments

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HUMAN RIGHTS
June 3, 1981
Page Two.

are so precise as to allow the torturer to impose the maximum voltage -- just short of that which would produce unconsciousness or death.

In an incredible interview with a producer for CBS REPORTS, Eric F. Saltzman, Timerman expressed what appears to be a sincere desire to be tortured once again -- this time on American television. He told Saltzman that he believed his book and subsequent interviews told all he has to tell through the medium of words. Now he would like to demonstrate, in a factually accurate replication, what it is like to be tortured.

Timerman says, "We will find an excellent torture doctor from Argentina, or Iran, or El Salvador, or Brazil, or Cuba, or the Soviet Union. There is no shortage of experts in the world."

Timerman intends his bizarre torture display to reach a relatively small number of individuals -- those making decisions about American human rights policy.

After praising hundreds of American groups and individuals who have offered to help, Timerman asks, "But the government of the United States -- what do Alexander Haig and Jean Kirkpatrick do? They do nothing. They don't worry about human rights. For them, everything is only Communists and allies. They are looking for war. No matter that the allies may be torturers and Nazis."

Jacobo Timerman is no campus radical or Third World Marxist. As editor of LA OPINION, he was known throughout the Spanish speaking world as a staunch anti-Communist, a Western oriented intellectual. I believe the American government will ultimately recognize the validity of his arguments. The question is: how many people will suffer and how badly until this ultimate realization takes place?

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